

94. *Assistance afforded by the Stethoscope in Doubtful Pregnancies.*—Our readers are already acquainted with the interesting and important discovery of M. Kergardec, of Paris, of the unequivocal signs furnished by the stethoscope of some cases of otherwise doubtful pregnancy. Dr. PROBART relates, in the *London Medical Repository and Review* for May last, three cases in which he detected pregnancy by the stethoscope. The first case was that of a maid servant, who had not menstruated for five months, having, she believed, taken cold the last time she was unwell. She complained of pain and swelling in the hypogastric region; her bowels were costive; she had no appetite, and felt no general uneasiness. The hypogastrium, felt through the dress, was tense and unyielding, and the patient affirmed that very slight pressure occasioned her considerable pain. Dr. Probart suspected pregnancy, but she denied the possibility; on examination, however, with the stethoscope, the "*bruit placentaire*," was instantly detected about midway between the umbilicus and superior anterior spinous process of the ilium; and between the former and the pubis, the heart's contraction in the fetus, beating in frequency double that of the mother. The girl still denied she was pregnant, but on being remonstrated with, acknowledged she had "kept company" with a man-servant in the house. She was shortly after delivered.

The second case was that of a married woman of emaciated appearance, the mother already of two children, who consulted Dr. P. on the state of her health, which another gentleman in the profession had represented as hopeless, from an opinion that she was "in a deep decline." There were considerable difficulty of breathing, some cough, occasional perspirations and debility. By means of the stethoscope, however, Dr. P. found the lungs healthy, but the heart was beating with a vastly augmented sound, and audible all over the chest, as well posteriorly as anteriorly, but unaccompanied by any preternatural impulse. Dr. P. concluded, therefore, that the above symptoms were the consequences of simple dilatation of the heart, and a suitable treatment was adopted, from which the poor woman derived so much relief, that she believed herself cured. She very soon again became alarmed at a gradual increase in the size of her belly, which her neighbours persuaded her arose from dropsy; and she, therefore, again presented herself to Dr. P. Being engaged at the time with other patients, he did not enter into a minute inquiry; and, taking it for granted that there was effusion, a natural sequela of the affection of the heart, he prescribed a combination of aperients and diuretics. Her size still increasing, she determined to pay him another visit; and, now doubting the accuracy of his former hasty diagnosis, as to the effusion, he auscultated the abdomen, and in a few minutes discovered the sounds of a fetal circulation. Willing as this person evidently was to believe the information he now communicated, she could not be convinced of the fact, as she had not felt the motion of the child, nor had experienced any of those sensations that marked her former pregnancies. Before her confinement, however, which happened about ten weeks subsequently, she was satisfied of its truth, and had made the usual preparations.

*Case III.*—<sup>44</sup> A young woman was admitted under my care, into the Suffolk Hospital, supposed to have ovarian dropsy. In the hurry attendant upon admitting patients I made no examination at the moment, but desired the woman to remain in bed the following morning until I had made my visit, with a view to more accurate observation. The account given of herself was, that she had suffered with her present complaints for two years, during which time she had been severally treated by a physician and two surgeons. There was apparent tenderness in the hypogastric region, upon slight pressure; and a spherical tumour was very palpable, extending from the pubis to the umbilicus, which so very nearly resembled the pregnant uterus about the seventh month, that I, without hesitation, put the question as to the possibility of pregnancy. The girl gave me the most solemn assurances it could not be, and said that, in consequence of her appearance, she had more than once in the course of the last

two years been so charged by her neighbours; and that so lately as only a fortnight ago, this report having again spread through the village, she, for the satisfaction of her mother and friends, submitted to an examination by the medical gentleman who attended the parish, and who then declared that she was not pregnant. Still, however, very doubtful of all this, I had recourse to the '*Experimentum crucis*,' when my suspicions were immediately realized in the existence of a loud '*bruit placentaire*,' with that still less equivocal sign, the action of a fetal heart. The girl, notwithstanding the positive manner in which I now insisted upon her situation, persevered for a long time in affirming her innocence; but ultimately she acknowledged 'an acquaintance' with a young man in the village: she was nevertheless sceptical on the score of pregnancy, as she continued to feel exactly as she had done for two years back. Her mother called at my house the next day, before going to see her daughter at the hospital, to hear my opinion of the latter, and manifested a disposition to quarrel with me on hearing the unwelcome tidings I communicated. The patient returned home with her mother, and was, a month after, delivered of a still-born child.

"There cannot, I think, be any doubt that the subject of this example was ignorant of her situation; for it is quite true that she had been ailing for two years; that she had menstruated but once during that time, which event appears to have happened a short time before the 'acquaintance,' and that the apothecary had declared her case not to be one of pregnancy."

#### MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE.

95. *Case of Poisoning by the Milk of a Poisoned Animal.*—"An old woman sold goat's milk, the produce of two goats, an old and a young one, to many of the inhabitants of Aurillac. On the 13th of July, 1827, sixteen persons, soon after having drunk some of this milk, suffered acute pains in the stomach, with nausea, and general distress and uneasiness: in some of the individuals the epigastric pains were very intense, they vomited porraceous and bloody matter; these symptoms were soon followed by violent head-ache, lassitude, pains and cramp in the extremities, with all the symptoms of cholera morbus. A mild plan of treatment, consisting of emollient and mucilaginous drinks, succeeded in restoring all the patients in twenty-four hours.

"On inquiring into the state of the two animals, it was found that the old goat had drunk some sour broth, which had been left in a copper vessel on the 12th. On the 14th it refused to eat; it tottered in its gait, and a thick and viscid saliva flowed from its mouth; the abdomen became tumid and painful; the pulse small. These symptoms increased, and the poor creature died on the 16th. On opening the body, the small intestines appeared to have undergone violent inflammation.—The young goat had not drunk any of the broth, and was in good health."—*Journal Général de Médecine*, Nov. 1827.

96. *Presumed Violation of a Child.*—The following question was submitted to the Faculté de Médecine, by the legal authorities:—Whether it was possible for an infant of fourteen months old to be violated? "Their opinion was also requested upon the facts stated by a pupil of the Hôpital Beaujon, who reported that "the hymen was torn, and that it appeared to have been recently ruptured." As, in a legal point of view, any forcible attempt to perpetrate such a crime is as criminal as its consummation, the faculty confined themselves to one point of inquiry, namely, to ascertain whether the appearances of the organs of generation justified the suspicion that violence had been inflicted. The certificate of the surgeon who first examined the infant stated that the hymen was ruptured, that the rupture appeared to be recent, and that the labia appeared to be inflamed. The commissioners observe, that every year, particu-